

Tell the Justice Department that it can no longer be silent on these abuses. It can not hide behind supposed investigations that have no end in sight. Victims must see justice. Take action now.
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I am writing because I am frustrated and outraged that serious allegations of rape, torture and indiscriminate killing by government contractors in the “War on Terror” and Iraqi reconstruction continue to surface, but yet seem to be largely ignored by the Department of Justice (DOJ). Years have passed without prosecution of widely reported human rights abuses by military and security contractors and without any degree of meaningful transparency as to the status of cases. This record makes a mockery of past DOJ promises that human rights abuses would not be tolerated.

In 2004, the Army’s Fay / Jones and Taguba reports investigating abuse at Abu Ghraib implicated contractors from two companies, L-3 Titan Corp. and CACI, in torture and ill treatment. Yet of the 20 known cases of abuse allegedly committed by civilians that have been forwarded to the Department of Justice, only one trial has been initiated.

Last year, at a Congressional hearing of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the general counsel of Blackwater admitted that one of its employees had shot and killed an Iraqi security officer on December 24, 2006. However, the US Attorney’s office of the Western District of Washington refuses even to confirm if an investigation is underway and if charges will be filed.

Most recently, the media has reported that former KBR contractor, Jamie Leigh Jones, was allegedly gang-raped in 2005 by KBR colleagues. While the Department of Defense refuses to probe the charges, citing the case’s status as “open” with the DOJ, even repeated inquiries by US Congressmen have been met with Justice Department silence.

The United States has an obligation to prosecute contractors working on its behalf for international human rights violations. The Department of Justice is charged with that responsibility.

If investigations result in an inability to prosecute, it is up to the Justice Department to clearly disclose those results to Congress and the public. Lawmakers need to know of any obstacles to prosecution of human rights violators to be able to effectively propose solutions. The Justice Department should at least provide the U.S. with that opportunity -- to develop capacity to bring justice and accountability to U.S. military and security contracting, an industry now seemingly dominated by abuse and impunity.

To keep cases “open” indefinitely and to use this status as a reason to prohibit any further explanation is to deny justice to human rights victims and to allow U.S. operations overseas to flout responsibility.

I hope that this is not the result desired by your office. I look to you to take immediate action to ensure those responsible for heinous abuses are finally brought to justice.